

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-08 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

IO-13 ORM-02 DHA-02 MCT-01 /083 W

----- 024069

R 090803Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4845

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 7892

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR TS LY AG XF

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN MFA OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON LIBYA, ALGERIA,
MIDDLE EAST AND OTHER GOT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

1. SUMMARY: DURING CALL MADE ON AMOR FEZZANI, TUNISIAN
MFA DIRECTOR FOR ARAB WORLD, BY EMBASSY OFFICERS AND
MR. GEORGE HARRIS, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR INR/RNA,
LIBYA, ALGERIA AND MIDDLE EAST WERE DISCUSSED.
END SUMMARY.

2. RELATIONS WITH LIBYA: FEZZANI CHARACTERIZED TUNISIA'S
BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH LIBYA AS COMPLICATED ONLY BY
QUESTION OF DELINEATION OF CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY
BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. HE SAID THAT NEGOTIATIONS
PRESENTLY BEING CONDUCTED ON THIS ISSUE ARE NOT GOING VERY
WELL, WITH TWO COUNTRIES UNABLE TO AGREE ON WHAT TO SUBMIT
TO INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE. TUNISIA WOULD LIKE
ICJ TO BE ASKED TO ARBITRATE ENTIRE QUESTION AND DRAW
BOUNDARY LINE; LIBYA ONLY WANTS TO REFER QUESTION TO
ICJ FOR GUIDANCE ON PRINCIPLES UNDER WHICH LINE COULD BE
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DRAWN. ACCORDING TO LIBYANS THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD THEN

DRAW BOUNDARY THEMSELVES. FEZZANI SAID THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT AT TOTAL IMPASSE AND POSSIBLE POINTS OF COMPROMISE REMAINED FOR COMBINING TWO POSITIONS, BUT HE DID NOT EVIDENCE GREAT OPTIMISM THAT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD PRODUCE AGREEMENT SATISFACTORY TO TUNISIA. HE OPINED THAT SOME RESULT SHOULD BE ACHIEVED IN PRESENT PHASE OF NEGOTIATIONS BY DECEMBER.

3. RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA: TURNING TO TUNISIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOR TO WEST, FEZZANI SAID THAT THEY WERE NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD--BUT WERE FROZEN ("GELE"). HE SAID THAT TUNISIA HAD CONCEIVED OF ITS RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA IN MULTICLATERAL MAGHREBIAN CONTEXT. SINCE RELATIONS IN MAGHREB HAD TAKEN DOWNWARD TURN BECAUSE OF SAHARA DISPUTE, THESE MULTILATERAL PROJECTS HAD ALSO BEEN FROZEN. TUNISIA NOW HOPES THAT IT CAN REORIENT RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA ALONG STRICTLY BILATERAL LINES. HE DID NOT EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS UNTIL AFTER ALGERIAN ELECTIONS EARLY NEXT YEAR. PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE WOULD THEN HAVE NEW MANDATE TO RULE AS AN ELECTED CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE NEW TEAM AT "ADMINISTRATIVE" LEVEL AS WELL. FEZZANI NOTED THAT THERE IS CERTAIN MALAISE IN ALGERIA WHICH TUNISIA IS WELL AWARE OF. IF WE KNOW ABOUT IT, FEZZANI SAID, BOUMEDIENE MUST KNOW AS WELL AND IN GREATER DETAIL. HE ATTRIBUTED MALAISE IN PART TO ALGERIA'S CONFLICT WITH MOROCCO OVER WESTERN SAHARA. AVERAGE ALGERIAN CARES NOTHING ABOUT SAHARAQUI CAUSE, IS CERTAINLY NOT PREPARED TO DIE FOR IT, AND DOES NOT UNDERSTAND WHY HIS GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO IT. FEZZANI SAID THAT BOTH KING HASSAN AND BOUMEDIENE NOW SEEMED TO BE HANDLING THE PROBLEM IN LOW KEY MANNER.

4. THE MIDDLE EAST: FEZZANI EXPRESSED TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT'S HOPE THAT NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION WILL TREAT MIDDLE EAST CRISIS AS HIGH PRIORITY QUESTION AND INITIATE SOME NEW MOVE TOWARD PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT SOON AFTER INAUGURATION IN JANUARY. HE FORESAW NEED OF SOME INITIATIVE AS SOON AS FEBRUARY OR MARCH SO THAT

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MOMENTUM IS QUICKLY ESTABLISHED. HE VIEWED GENEVA CONFERENCE AS THE PROPER VENUE FOR ON-GOING NEGOTIATIONS.

5. WHEN ASKED ABOUT TUNISIA'S CURRENT ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS, FEZZANI SAID THAT GOT HAS ALWAYS WORKED FOR ACCOMMODATION AND CONCILIATION AND HAS ENCOURAGED PLO TO ACCEPT EXISTENCE OF ISRAEL. HE THOUGHT THAT YASSIR ARAFAT NOW RECOGNIZED THAT PLO'S OFFICIAL

PUBLIC POSITION CALLING FOR A MULTI-SECTARIAN, SECULAR STATE WAS AN IMPOSSIBLE GOAL BUT ARAFAT COULD NOT ENTER INTO ANY NEGOTIATIONS BY CONCEDED IN ADVANCE ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST AS SEPARATE STATE. FEZZANI STATED THAT FIRST STEP MUST BE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ARAB LANDS OCCUPIED SINCE 1967. THE PLO WOULD ESTABLISH ITS OWN STATE IN LIBERATED TERRITORY (PROBABLY WEST BANK OF JORDAN AND GAZA STRIP). THIS STATE, PERFORCE, WOULD HAVE RUDIMENTARY RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL WHICH IN TIME WOULD GROWN INTO COOPERATION AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION. ONCE THE PLO HAD BEGUN TO DEAL WITH ISRAEL, OTHER ARAB STATES COULD RECOGNIZE IT AS A DE JURE SENSE.

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IO-13 DHA-02 ORM-02 MCT-01 /083 W

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6. FEZZANI EMPHASIZED THAT ACTION ALONG THESE LINES MUST COME SOON SINCE NEW GENERATIONS OF PALESTINIANS, BORN IN REFUGEE CAMPS, ATTUNED TO TERRORISM AS POLITICAL TOOL, AND TRAUMATIZED BY EXPERIENCES OF TEL ZAATAR MAY SOON SUPPLANT GENERATION OF YASSIR ARAFAT AT HEAD OF PLO. ARAFAT IS ALREADY BEING ACCUSED OF CAPITULATION AND HE MUST BE ABLE TO SHOW PROGRESS IN ORDER TO KEEP HIS MOVEMENT BEHIND HIM. FEZZANI INDICATED THAT GOT BELIEVES PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO MIDDLE EAST EUESTION WILL BECOME

INCREASINGLY MORE DIFFICULT AS TIME PASSES AND MORE
RADICALIZED ELEMENTS MOVE INTO LEADERSHIP OF PLO. HE
ALSO BELIEVED THAT RAPPROACHMENT BETWEEN EGYPTIAN
PRESIDENT SADAT AND SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD, WHICH HE
CHARACTERIZED AS MOST SIGNIFICANT RESULT OF RIYADH AND
CAIRO CONFERENCES, IS FRAGILE AND IT COULD NOT BE
EXPECTED TO LAST IN THE ABSENCE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT.

7. REGARDING LEBANON, HE SAID CAIRO CONFERENCE HAD
RESOLVED MOST OF SERIOUS "INTRA-ARAB" PROBLEMS, BUT THAT
SEPARATE AND DISTINCT INTRA-LEBANESE CONFLICTS REMAINED
UNRESOLVED. AT SAME TIME, HE STATED SYRIAN-IRAQI
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RELATIONS ARE EXTEREMELY STRAINED.

8. WHEN ASKED SPECIFICALLY ABOUT BOURGUIBA OCTOBER 26
PROPOSAL THAT ARAFAT GOT TO UN TO ACCEPT PUBLICALLY 1947
GENERAL ASSEMBLY PARTITION PLAN, FEZZANI TOOK OFFICIAL
GOT LINE THAT ISRAEL HAD ALREADY REJECTED THIS CONCEPT
ON GROUNDS THAT CONDITIONS HAD CHANGED IN INTERIM AND
THAT ARAFAT HAD SAID PLO HAD NOT HAD TIME TO CONSIDER
PROPOSAL FORMALLY. FEZZANI'S EARLIER COMMENTS THAT
PLO COULD NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL UNTIL OCCUPIED LANDS
RETURNED AND A PALESTINIAN STATE ESTABLISHED
APPEARED TO INDICATE THAT PLO WAS NOT BUYING IDEA.
NO MPA OFFICIAL CAN, HOWEVER, ADMIT OPENLY FAILURE
OF ANY PROPOSAL MADE BY BOURGUIBA, NOUIRA OR CHATTY
UNTIL SUCH IS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED FROM ABOVE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TUNIS07892
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760417-0034
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761165/aaaaceed.tel
Line Count: 203
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 MAY 2004 by woolflhd>; APPROVED <13 SEP 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TUNISIAN MFA OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON LIBYA, ALGERIA, MIDDLE EAST AND OTHER GOT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES
TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY, AG, XF, (FEZZANI, AMOR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006